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Message Text

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ACTION TRSE-00

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 SP-02 USIA-06
AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 EPG-02 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01
CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00
XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 L-03 H-01 PA-01
PRS-01 /107 W
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P R 060947Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2888
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY MANILA

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MANILA FOR USADB

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TAGS: PFOR, TH, VN, LA
SUBJ: RED: MEKONG COORDINATING COMMITTEE (MCC)

REF: A) BANGKOK 12071, B) BANGKOK 2065, C) BANGKOK 2174

1. SUMMARY: MCC SECRETARIAT WILL SURVIVE THROUGH CY 1977 BECAUSE OF EFFORTS OF DUTCH AND OTHERS TO SUPPLEMENT UNDP CONTRIBUTION TO OPERATING BUDGET. NEXT BIG ITEM ON MCC AGENDA IS VIENTIANE MEETING - OPTIMISTICALLY AND TENTATIVELY JUNE 25 - OF RTG, LPDR, SRV AND SECRETARIAT TO DRAW UP OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR TRIPARTITE INTERIM COMMITTEE AND APPROVE DEFINITIVE WORK PLAN. END SUMMARY.

2. MCC EXECAGENT CONVENED OFF-RECORD MEETING OF DONORS AND FRIENDS
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ON MAY 31, 1977 TO REPORT ON STATUS OF SECRETARIAT BUDGET FOR CY 1977 AND ON PROGRESS TOWARD ESTABLISHING INTERIM COMMITTEE AND TO PRESENT RECAPITULATION OF PROJECTS APPROVED IN 1975 FOR VIETNAM (LQTTER TOPIC DISCUSSED IN REF A). IN ATTENDANCE WERE UNDP, IBRD, AUSTRALIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, FRANCE, GERMANY, INDONESIA, JAPAN, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, UK, US, USSR AND FORD FOUNDATION.

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3. THE CY 1977 BUDGET OF $1.0 MILLION IS NOW FIRM. AS REPORTED IN REF C, UNDP PROVIDED $750,000; REMAINDER HAS NOW BEEN MADE UP BY AUSTRALIA (36), FRANCE (15), JAPAN (30), NETHERLANDS (101), NEW ZEALAND (15), SWITZERLAND (23), THAILAND (10), AND UK (20). SWISS AND THAI PLEDGES ARE ONLY UNOFFICIALLY CONFIRMED. EXECAGENT EXPLAINED THAT 1977 IS THE FINAL YEAR OF UNDP SUPPORT UNDER PHASE IV IN THE MCC HISTORY. WITHOUT A FORMAL COMMITTEE MEETING, A PHASE V PROGRAM CANNOT BE SUBMITTED FOR UNDP ATTENTION AND APPROVAL FOR JANUARY 1978. UNDP REGIONAL REP REPORTED THAT MATTER HAS BEEN REFERRED TO UNDP WITH RECOMMENDATION THAT A BRIDGING PROGRAM BE AUTHORIZED FOR CY 1978 TO GIVE INTERIM COMMITTEE (SEE BELOW) OPPORTUNITY TO CONVENE, FORMULATE PLANS AND APPROVE FIVE-YEAR WORK PLAN CONSIDERATION FOR 1979. DUTCH ASKED IF THIS MEANT ANOTHER QUOTE SAVING PLAN UNQUOTE FOR 1978, WAS TOLD NO AND CHARACTERIZED IT AS QUOTE A GOOD THING BECAUSE HIS GOVERNMENT HAD DRAWN THE LINE AT 1977 UNQUOTE. UNDP REP CERTAINLY DID NOT INSTILL CONFIDENCE THAT UNDP WOULD ACTUALLY COME THROUGH, BUT WAS OBVIOUSLY UNDER SEVERE CONSTRAINT. AT ESCAP PLENARY, LPDR UNOFFICIALLY AND SRV OFFICIALLY ASKED THAT UNDP CONTINUE SUPPORT THROUGH 1978. EXECAGENT ANNOUNCED THAT LPDR MFA HAD SINCE OFFICIALLY CONFIRMED ITS POSITION TO ESCAP.

4. AT ESCAP MEETING, RTG, LPDR AND SRV ISSUED JOINT COMMUNIQUE (POUCHED SEPARATELY) EXPRESSING READINESS TO FORM INTERIM COMMITTEE, PENDING RESUPMTION OF CAMBODIA PARTICIPATION, AT MEETING TO BE CONVENED IN VIENTIANE. LPDR MFA HAS FORMALLY ADVISED ALL PARTIES AND MEETING TENTATIVELY SET FOR JUNE 25 (FYI: THIS SEEMS PROBLEMATICAL BECAUSE EXECAGENT VISITS LPDR AND SRV FROM JUNE 5-17, THUS WE DOUBT THAT ALL ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE FOR THE DATE
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MENTIONED). THE INTERIM COMMITTEE WILL HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH WITH A NEW CHARTER, AGREED WORK PLANS AND COMMUNICATIONS TO INTERESTED DONORS. THE SRV PRESUMABLY WILL ALSO HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT COMPONENTS OF THE OLD PLAN WILL BE PICKED UP AND IN WHAT PRIORITY.

5. IBRD ASKED HOW THIS DEVELOPMENT WOULD AFFECT THE SECRETARIAT AND BE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT NOW DOES. EXECAGENT POINTED OUT THAT THE SECRETARIAT COULD NOW ONLY IMPLEMENT PROJECTS IN THE 1975 APPROVED WORK PLAN AND NUMBERS OF SUCH PROJECTS ARE RUNNING OUT. IMPLEMENTATION MUST TAKE PLACE THROUGH NATIONAL COMMITTEES, E.G., CURRENTLY ONLY LPDR AND RTG. THE SECRETARIAT CANNOT NOW ACCEPT OR PURSUE FUNDING OR EMPLOY NEW STAFF, BUT MUST DEPEND ON THE NATIONAL COMMITTEES. FORMATION OF THE INTERIM COMMITTEE WOULD RESTORE THE PRIOR MODUS OPERANDI UNDER WHICH PROJECTS WERE APPROVED AND RECIPIENT COUNTRIES EITHER SOUGHT FUNDING ON THEIR OWN OR ASKED THE SECRETARIAT TO DO SO ON AN INDIVIDUAL PROJECT BASIS.

6. UNDP ASKED HOW ONE DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN A NATIONAL AND A BASIN-

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WIDE PROJECT. THE EXECAGENT'S ANSWER ONLY SERVED TO CONFIRM THE AMBIGUITY. IT SEEMS THAT THE DIFFERENCE IS AT THE OPTION OF THE MEMBER, ALTHOUGH THE SECRETARIAT TAKES CREDIT FOR THE MCC IF THE PROJECT WAS COMPREHENDED IN THE EXISTING LONG-RANGE, INDICATIVE BASINWIDE PLAN OR FALLS WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHY LIMITS OF THE BASIN. THE POINT BECAME VERY RELAVENT WHEN THE DUTCH REP ASKED HOW THE SRV, FOR EXAMPLE, EXPECTED TO COUNT THE DUTCH GUILDERS 35 MILLION PROVIDED ON A BILATERAL BASIS. THE EXECAGENT'S ANSWER WAS THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY THE SRV THAT IT WOULD MANAGE SUCH FUNDS AND PROJECTS ITSELF AND SECRETARIAT EFFORTS SHOULD BE TOWARD QUOTE NEW MONEY UNQUOTE. THIS DID NOT APPEAR TO BE WHAT THE DUTCH HAD EXPECTED NOR DID THEIR REP SEEM HAPPY WITH THE IMPLICATIONS.

7. THE DUTCH INQUIRY LED THE EXEC AGENT TO RECOUNT THE IDEAS PUT FORTH BY THE SRV ESCAP DELEGATES ON HOW THE SRV WOULD WORK WITH THE SECRETARIAT. SRV DOES NOT EXPECT TO CONTRIBUTE FUNDS TO SEC-RETARIAT OPERATIONS, BUT MAY PROVIDE STAFF (THREE NOW ON BOARD)
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AND WILL CONTRIBUTE IN-KIND SERVICES, E.G., ON BASINWIDE FLOOD FORECASTING, BY NATIONAL EMPLOYEES OF THE SRV. BECAUSE SRV HAS NO DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN BANGKOK, SRV DISCUSSING WITH LPDR PROSPECT OF HAVING VIENTIANE LIAISON OFFICE, STAFFED BY VN AND LAO TECHNICIANS ON ROTATING BASIS. LAO OFFICIALS APPARENTLY HAVE TOLD EXECAGENT THAT THEY HAVE SPACE AVAIALBLE AND ARE NOT AVERSE TO THE SRV IDEA.

8. COMMENT: IN ALL SUCH DELIBERATIONS, THE EXECAGENT MANAGES TO SUSTAIN AN OPTIMISTIC AND ENTHUSIASTIC POSTURE THAT OCCASIONALLY SEEMS TO IGNORE THE POLITICAL REALITIES. IN HIS DEFENSE, HOWEVER, ONE DOUBTS THAT THE SECRETARIAT COULD HAVE SURVIVED THE LAST TWO YEARS HAD HE BEEN A BEARER OF DOOM AND GLOOM. IF THE UPCOMING VIENTIANE TRIPARTITE NEGOTIATIONS ARE SUCCESSFUL AND A VIABLE INTERIM COMMITTEE EMERGES, THE CREDIT MAY GO IN PART TO HIS PERSUASIVE PERSONALITY BUT IS MORE LIKELY TO BE THE RESULT OF THE THREE COUNTRIES TEMPORARILY SUBORDINATING THEIR POLITICAL DIF-FERENCES IN FAVOR OF THE ATTRACTIVE PROSPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCING FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES. CON-SIDERING THE CURRENT ABSENCE OF ENTHUSIASM AND THE WAIT AND SEE ATTITUDE MANIFESTED BY THE DONORS, THE INTERIM COMMITTEE MAY IN THE END FIND THE CANDLE THEY RECEIVE NOT QUITE WORTH THE RACE.
WHITEHOUSE

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